



North Head Sanctuary Foundation

Custodians of North Head

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Next General Meeting

Will be on Wednesday 26 November 2014 at 7.00pm.
There will be a talk about Art of North Head. More details next month.

Education Room – Bandicoot Heaven

Our community education room is open 10am to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays in Building 20. Call in to have a chat or gather information.

On 21 September, we had a stall at the Q Station Community Day and Bandicoot Heaven hosted Australian Wildflower Discovery Launch with Cheralyn Darcey.

If you'd like to help others get to know more about North Head, please contact Judy Lambert on 9949 3521(ah) or email tswombat@optusnet.com.au

Views of point

I never noticed, the other week, when I brushed against a spinifex (*Triodia*) clump. I got back to the motel, washed my socks, and in the dry Alice Springs heat, they were ready to wear at dawn.

Something was wrong, though. My leg itched, and suspecting an insect, I looked closely. I found several seeds which had evaded vigorous washing, and I remembered what Ernest Giles said.

In 1872, in *Australia Twice Traversed*, he wrote of "...the so-called spinifex or porcupine grass — botanically, the *Triodia*, or *Festuca irritans*..."

About a week later, he added "Whenever one moves, these spines enter the clothes in all directions, making it quite a torture to walk about among them." I can confirm that.

Three weeks later, Giles "... fell into a hideous bunch of this horrid stuff, and got pricked from head to foot; the spiny points breaking off in my clothes and flesh caused me great annoyance and pain for many days after." I didn't try that.

A few days later, he said that that he and the horses were suffering after going through 200 miles of "the vile stuff", and my third shot, showing a *Triodia*-covered hillside will give you the idea of what it was like.

Giles usually travelled with a small dog, and learned to carry a dog called Monkey, when they passed through *Triodia*.

Peter Macinnis



That was less possible with camels, and he reported in 1875 that they lost all the hair on their legs up to three feet, and the bare skin turned black. In 1897, David Carnegie's horses and camels were so hungry, they ate spinifex.

Spines and prickles have always interested me, and if you look at <http://www.tinyurl.com/ozlingo>, you will find that the Bathurst burr and cobbler's pegs were once a part of my long list of temporary obsessions.

Here are some views of cobbler's pegs seeds, *Bidens* sp.



Parents, grandparents and teachers please note: cobbler's pegs seeds are great for germination experiments (so are dandelion seeds). Hint: a eucalyptus-scented tissue delays germination by several days.



Dandelions above right don't have barbs, but ticks do: note the stylet between the palps below!



Lizards have spines, too, and every point tells an evolutionary tale.



But if I care about pointy bits, I am still a paid-up member of the Nursery Thistle-Bashers!



Spring has sprung

Geoff Lambert

Baby birds are appearing all over North Head. The ducks on the Hanging Swamp have 9 ducklings; the plovers (Lapwings) opposite Bandicoot Heaven have 4 chicks which are doubling in size every few days; the ravens in the tree up the road are feeding something in their nest and the squawk of young magpies can be heard from the nest in the Norfolk Island Pine behind the Officers Mess. Echidnas are back in action too.

On Monday (22 Sept), one of the four baby plover chicks, tiny fragile thing that it was, fell through a stormwater grating into the water below and took refuge in the pipe. Luckily, its mother's frantic cries attracted the attention of human passers-by, who swooped to the rescue and returned baby to Mum. They were scolded for their efforts! (I was one of them. The babies are **so tiny and insubstantial**- I doubt that it weighed more than about 10 grams).



Comesperma ericinum

Geoff Lambert



This is *Comesperma ericinum*, also known as the pyramid flower, Milkwort or, more *colloquially*, as "Matchheads". PlantNet describes it thus: Shrub 1–1.5m high; often sparsely branched with clusters of erect branches in upper part; stems reddish, glabrous to bristly.

Leaves oblong to linear, 5–25 mm long, 1–4 mm wide. Racemes terminal, 2–4 cm long, often clustered near the top of the stems; pedicels 4–6 mm long. Flowers 4–8 mm long, purple or lilac-pink or white. Outer sepals up to 2 mm long, half as long as wing sepals; wing sepals 4–8.5 mm long. Lateral petals equal to or longer than keel; keel pouched at sides.

They are in flower on North Head at the moment. Yes – they do look like matchheads, do they not? But not to everybody. Each year, on our wildflower walks, the following conversation invariably takes place between me and a child on the walk.

"What do you reckon these guys are called?"

"What?"

"Match heads- do you know why?"

"No— why?"

"Because they look like the heads of matches."

"What are matches?"

Native Plant Nursery

We have a lot to do and the more hands the better.



Before and after photos, North Fort, near the toilet block. First photo taken 6 Jan 2012 and second on 24 Sept 2014.

If you would like to help us please email Jenny at northhead@fastmail.fm or turn up any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and 12 noon.

Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson



The only person to be buried in the Third Cemetery in 1910 was Hector Spence. He died on 6 April 1910.

Evening News (Sydney, NSW : 1869-1931) 7 April 1910

"SMALLPOX OUTBREAK.
FIVE CASES IN SYDNEY.
A DEATH AFTER 24 HOURS' ILLNESS."

"The name of the patient who died at the Quarantine Station on Wednesday night was Hector Spence. He was 35 years of age, a native of Scotland, and was a third-class passenger by the R.M.S. Otway. He died from that form of the disease known, as hemorrhagic smallpox, and was ill only 24 hours. It was the same form of illness which caused the death that occurred earlier in the week at the Melbourne Quarantine Station. It transpires that only two patients, and not three, as was reported, were isolated on Wednesday as supposed smallpox cases. Spence was one; the other was a male third-class passenger named Goldthorpe. The latter's case was this afternoon diagnosed as smallpox, but he is now in a convalescent state, as also are the three patients whose cases were reported previously. Thus there have been five cases in Sydney, and while one was fatal the others are on the way to recovery. . About a dozen more of the Otway's passengers were released from the Quarantine Station this morning, in all, this makes 36 who have now been released out of about 500."